



PRESIDENT'S ANNUAL REPORT - 2014

To the Committee, Members and Supporters,

The Friends of Baguia during the year ended 31 December 2014 have continued to provide strong support to the community of Baguia. I believe this is highlighted by the City of Stonnington signing a 5 year Memorandum of Understanding with Baguia. This also underlines the strong support we have built within our local Council and the successful relationships we have made in the Baguia community.

Key highlights from 2014:

1. Working in Timor-Leste for 4 months in the first half of the year has enabled me to spend long weekends in Baguia and also remain in weekly phone contact with our Project Coordinator in Baguia. This greatly assisted in ensuring that our projects were being adequately managed. I was also able to organize Australian Business Visa's for the **Sr. Antonio dos Ramos, Baguia Sub-district Administrator** and **Sra. Leopoldina Guterres, Project Coordinator** to come to Melbourne to attend the Friendship Conference in July 2014. This was Antonio's first trip to Australia and he stayed for 10 days, while Leopoldina had a busy 3 weeks with schools and presentations to key donors.
2. The VLGA Friendship Conference was a wonderful time for the committee and other Friendship groups to network and share ideas. Approximately 30% of participants were from Timor-Leste and it was great to hear their opinions. Friends of Baguia had a stall at the event and it gave us a strong presence.
3. Friends of Baguia is now a registered "Australian organization" in Timor-Leste under the Ministry of Justice and this has resolved issues around operating the Friends of Baguia BNU Bank account in Timor-Leste.
4. The Timor-Leste government is continuing to focus on developing more kindergartens in the districts so Friends of Baguia have started to provide support to five new local kindergartens. The communities in the villages of Hae Coni, Osso Huna, Samalari, Aflocai and Larimi have themselves established kindergartens with the women working on a voluntary basis. Friends of Baguia's support and training for these women will enable them to develop kindergartens that will give local children a much better chance of completing their Primary level education.
5. Our scholarship program continues to grow with more students enrolling in schools and new schools opening in the more remote outlying areas of Baguia Sub-district. We have also increased the number of university level scholarships and have taken on two additional students.



FRIENDS OF BAGUIA

Baguia

Connecting You with the People of East Timor

6. In October, Friends of Baguia partnered with the Rotary Club of Hawthorn and Rotary Donations In Kind to send a 40 foot container from Melbourne to Baguia. It was loaded with school desks and chairs – especially small ones for all the new kindergartens, musical instruments and clothing. I spent a month in Timor-Leste to organize the logistics of getting it off the Dili wharf and trucking it up to the mountains. The goods were all shared out among the many village schools and there were many smiling faces in Baguia as we unloaded four large trucks!

7. The Friends of Baguia Trivia Night in May was a successful fundraiser thanks to the many Baguia supporters who attended this fun night. We also had a large table of Councilors and we gratefully appreciate their on-going support, especially in giving us the wonderful venue of the Malvern Town Hall.

Derarca O'Mahony
President
Friends of Baguia
28 January 2015